



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT TO THE SECRETARY OF THE ARMY
105 ARMY PENTAGON
WASHINGTON DC 20310-0105



March 6, 2003

SAAA

MEMORANDUM FOR HQDA CONFERENCE PROPONENTS

SUBJECT: Use of Appropriated Funds to Purchase Light Refreshments at Conferences

1. Recently the General Accounting Office (GAO) issued a decision regarding the proper use of appropriated funds for the purchase of light refreshments at official conferences.¹ The decision restates the general rule that without specific statutory authority, appropriated funds are not available to feed government employees at their duty stations. Consumption of food by conference attendees who are not in TDY status is considered a personal expense and not reimbursable by the Government.

2. The GAO decision changes previous guidance in the General Services Administration's (GSA) Federal Travel Regulation on conference planning, which was amended in 2000 to permit agencies to use appropriated funds to pay for light refreshments at official conferences.² The DoD Joint Travel Regulation and Joint Federal Travel Regulation were likewise amended to state that the Government could pay for light refreshments for all attendees at conferences when a majority of the conference attendees ("at least 51%") were in a travel status.³ The GAO decision now advises agency certifying officers that GSA's travel regulation on conference planning should not be relied upon to authorize light refreshments at conferences for employees who are not in a travel status.

3. In accordance with the GAO decision, those activities sponsoring conferences must now comply with the following requirements:

- Appropriated funds cannot be used to pay for light refreshments at conferences for local (non-TDY) attendees. Conference Proponents may not use a registration fee or other procedure to circumvent the requirements of the GAO decision.

When light refreshments are served at a conference at Government expense, local attendees must either refrain from partaking of the refreshments or pay for them with personal funds.

¹ Use of Appropriated Funds to Purchase Light Refreshments at Conferences, B-288266, Jan. 27, 2003.

² 41 CFR § 301-74.11.

³ JTR, Vol. 2, Chap. 4, Part 8: Conferences, C4950 F and JFTR, Vol. 1, Chap. 2, Part G: Conferences, U2550 F.

Conference proponents should carefully consider the need to purchase light refreshments for attendees in TDY status. Such attendees already receive a generous allowance for meals. The cost to the Government for light refreshments supplied by conference hosts is often disproportionate to the value received. All officers and employees should be good stewards of the Government's resources.

REMINDER: The Administrative Assistant to the Secretary of the Army must approve the conference BEFORE commitments are made, contracts are awarded, or task orders are issued.

4. Please direct any questions or inquiries regarding this matter to LTC Nat Causey, Office of the Chief Attorney, 703-697-5423, or via email to: nat.causey@hqda.army.mil.

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for Joel B. Hudson